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ABSTRACT

The establishment of reading clinics or centers at universities and colleges to provide assessment and instructional practice to students enrolled in reading specialist certification and graduate degrees in reading provide valuable services to the surrounding community by introducing additional skills to help remedial readers. A study examined the effectiveness of one such clinic--an intensive summer remedial reading program at a suburban Philadelphia college. Subjects were nine males and seven females reading about 2 years below grade level and ranging in age from 7 years to 16 years. For approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes, 4 days a week for 7 weeks, subjects received instruction in word recognition skills and the Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic and Tactile approach as designed by Grace Fernald. Students were also involved in directed reading activities, and the Language Experience Approach. Several formal and informal instruments were administered before and after the program. Results indicated that: (1) the independent level of reading rose; (2) the instructional level rose; (3) word comprehension scores improved significantly; and the passage comprehension scores improved significantly. Findings suggest that colleges and universities should encourage the development of remedial reading centers. (Contains 12 references.) (RS)

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The effectiveness of reading centers attached to university reading programs

by

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The establishment of reading clinics or centers at universities and colleges to provide assessment and instruction practice to students enrolled in reading specialist certification and graduate degrees in reading provide valuable services to the surrounding community by introducing additional skills to help remedial readers (Irvin and Lynch-Brown, 1988; Preininger, 1985). Cornelius and Semmel (1990) indicate that a summer program would be helpful at least in introducing new and reinforcing old reading skills.

However a review of the literature indicates that there is a limited amount of studies done to research the effectiveness of these centers. Irvin and Lynch-Brown (1988) reported that only 52% of the university reading clinics surveyed indicated that research was a function of the clinic.

Different methods and styles were used by the clinics or centers. Most of them used individual and small group instruction based on the particular curriculum of the center or the needs of the child. Some centers such as the ones at Rutgers University and Montclair State used microcomputers. Clients were diagnosed through the use of, among others, the Gates Macginitie Reading Test, the Nelson-Denny Reading Test-Revised, the Gray Oval Reading Test, the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised, and the Durrell Analysis of

Reading Difficulty. The Slosson Intelligence Test appeared to be the most popular measure of intellectual functioning (Preininger, 1985). Student-made inventories were used by most clinics or centers as part of the diagnostic process.

Students' ages ranged from six years and ten months to eighteen years and four months according to Soltesz (1982). However the bulk of the clientele was from the elementary and middle schools (Preininger, 1985).

Most of the teachers at these centers were graduate students working towards a graduate degree in reading or the Reading Specialist Certification.

When it comes to the effectiveness of the clinics, there is very little literature available. Cahn (1988) reported that girls significantly outperformed boys in an intensive reading clinic program when taught by female instructors. Soltesz (1982) found that 56% of students at the Kean College Reading Clinic reported some form of residual gain after a minimum of 13 sessions of approximately 1 1/2 hours each. Bartelo (1979) found the range of gain in independent reading level was from zero year zero month to two years two months. In the case of instructional reading level, the range was from a loss of one month to a gain of three years and three months.

Harris and Sipay (1990) report that evidence on the effectiveness of remediation is mixed. They also point

out that programs, that had high learning rates during remediation and continued improvement after remedial help was stopped, had some of these factors in common: Pupils were elementary students from middle class families; students had IQs of 90 or better; more than fifty hours of instruction in the program; and certified and experienced teachers.

The present study has as its major purpose the confirmation of the effectiveness of intensive remedial reading programs.

Subjects

The population consisted of all the students enrolled in the Remedial Reading Summer school of a suburban Philadelphia college. They were all reading at about 2 years below grade level as per their report card. There were 16 students (9 males and 7 females) ranging in chronological age from 7 years one month to 16 years, and in grade level from end of first to end of tenth. Six of the students came from a foster home and the remaining 10 were children of middle-class parents.

Teachers

The teachers were graduate students completing a teaching and assessment practicum required for Reading Specialist Certification and/or Master of Science in Reading. There were 9 teachers in all, eight of whom were already state certified teachers.

Treatment Program

The program was a seven-week one. The students were tested during the first week and the final week . All students were administered the Slosson Intelligence Test-Revised (SIT-R) to assess the intellectual functioning level and to help determine the Reading Expectancy Level as per the Bond and Tinker formula. Next, Informal Word Recognition and Informal Reading Inventories designed by the college were used to determine independent, instructional and frustrational levels of reading. Finally the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised (WRMT-R) were used to determine grade and age equivalencies.

On the basis of these results, individual and small group programs of instruction were designed. Instruction took place four days a week between the hours of 9 and 11:30 with a 15-minute break. Each student received about fifteen minutes of word recognition skills. The Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic and Tactile (VAKT) approach as designed by Grace Fernald was the method that was used. Every student was read to for about twenty minutes daily. The remainder of the time, the students were involved in Directed Reading Activities (DRA) or Language Experience Approach (LEA).

The main components of the DRA were activation of prior knowledge, purpose setting, statement of hypotheses, silent reading, verification of hypotheses, comprehensive check and follow-up activities.

The LEAs were very child-oriented with the children choosing the topic. The teachers would help collect information and direct children's writing.

Statistical Analysis

T-tests for unrelated samples were performed on pre and post test scores. The level of significance was set at .05.

Results

An examination of the results revealed that the post-test scores were significantly better than the pretest scores.

The independent level of reading rose from a mean of 2.5 grade level to 3.8 ($t=3.38$, $<.05$).

The instructional level rose from 3.7 grade level to 4.9 ($t= 3.16$, $<.05$).

The word comprehension scores as per the WRMT-R improved significantly from a mean of 35.76 to 40.46 ($t=2.67$, $<.05$).

The passage comprehension scores as per the WRMT-R improved significantly from a mean of 29.21 to 30.35 ($t=2.96$, $<.05$).

Discussion

On the basis of these results, it would appear that colleges and universities should encourage the development of remedial reading centers.

These centers should be open to children of all economic and social backgrounds because everybody seems

to benefit from intensive remedial instruction.

More reading clinics should make their data available to students doing research so that more information might be available to researchers and advanced graduate students.

Future researchers should try to focus on follow-up studies of students who have completed remedial programs to see if the skills learned are maintained.

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